



Sprunt's yacht, the *Luola*.
Image: Lower Cape Fear Historical Society

The waterfront area in which the Sprunt compress was located was also home to several other employers of blacks, including railroad offices, lumber yards, pitch and turpentine plants, and shipping firms. As news spread of the happenings at Sprunt's and that armed mobs of white men were throughout the city, African American workers from the waterfront sought to make their way to their homes but were stopped by white armed patrols who told them to turn back.⁵³

Waddell's speech cautioning men to return home peacefully only a short time earlier failed to calm tempers. After burning the *Record*, some men boarded the city streetcar trolley and rode it along its route, traveling south on Sixth Street, turning west on Castle, and then turning north on Front Street into the northern sections of town. Flushed with excitement from the fire, as the streetcar entered black neighborhoods along Castle Street, they fired their rifles into the homes and businesses of black residents.⁵⁴ By the time the white men who lived in the Brooklyn area had returned home, by foot or streetcar, their adrenaline was pumping and tensions were high.

Eye of the Storm – Fourth and Harnett Streets

The bloodshed began when black workers from the waterfront industrial yards and Brooklyn residents were confronted with armed whites. The place where the peace fractured was at the corner of Fourth and Harnett Streets in Brooklyn, a mixed race neighborhood on the edge of the predominantly black section of Wilmington.

A group of blacks were gathered on the southwest corner of Fourth and Harnett near Brunje's Saloon in George Heyer's store when armed whites returned to the neighborhood. A streetcar loaded with men direct from burning the *Record* also entered the area.⁵⁵ As the groups exchanged verbal assaults from opposite street corners, whites and blacks alike sought to calm fellow citizens.

Norman Lindsay encouraged his fellow blacks to go home: "For the sake of your lives, your families, your children, and your country, go home and stay there!"⁵⁶ After Lindsay's plea, the group of blacks moved to the opposite corner at W. A. Walker's store while the whites took up a position between Brunje's store and St. Matthew's English Lutheran Church. Aaron Lockamy, a newly deputized white police officer, also tried to diffuse the problem by going between both groups and trying to get them to disperse. He recalled that, while serving as a special policeman during the aftermath of the election, he was stationed in Brooklyn to ensure that the opening of two bars on Fourth Street would be peaceful. Instructed not to arrest anyone by Chief Melton, Lockamy asked the blacks to

⁵³ *Wilmington Messenger* November 11, 1898.

⁵⁴ Prather, *We Have Taken a City*, 122.

⁵⁵ Among the men on the streetcar was Sam Matthews, armed with a navy rifle even though he was not an active member of the Naval Reserves. Hayden, WLI, 91; Crew of the Nantucket, William Lord de Rosset, *Pictorial and Historical New Hanover County*, 89.

⁵⁶ Hayden, *History of the WLI*, 88.